



## Empathy

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- Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what other people feel, see things from their point of view, and imagine yourself in their place. Essentially, it is putting yourself in someone else's position and feeling what they must be feeling.
- While people are generally pretty well-attuned to their own feelings and emotions, getting into someone else's head can be a bit more difficult. The ability to feel empathy allows people to "walk a mile in another's shoes".
- An empathetic point of view is achieved by setting aside our own interests, current disposition, and relation to the agent and sympathizing with the effects of a person's actions on those around him.

### Operationalization of Empathy: According to David Hume

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- X notices that Y is injured and that he is in pain.
- A mental state similar to that of Y arises in X. He experiences the idea of pain, of Y.
- This feeling arises from a kind of association or due to psychological simulation of Y's pain in X's mind.
- This **feeling of empathy** creates a motivational drive in X to rush to Y's help.

### Different Types of Empathy

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- **Affective Empathy:** It involves the ability to understand another person's emotions and respond appropriately.  
Such emotional understanding may lead to someone feeling concerned for another person's well-being, or it may lead to feelings of personal distress.
- **Somatic Empathy:** It involves having a sort of physical reaction in response to what someone else is experiencing. People sometimes physically experience what another person is feeling.
- **Cognitive Empathy:** It involves being able to understand another person's mental state and what they might be thinking in response to the situation.  
This is related to what psychologists refer to as theory of mind, or thinking about what other people are thinking.

## Components of Empathy

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- Empathy as a Virtue:** A school of ethics, moral sentimentalism, considers that morality has its source in our emotions and desires. Moral sentimentalism provides plausible explanations of common aspects of morality.
 

Empathy, a term often used for a kind of concern for another, is considered as an important virtue.
- Rational Element:** Some other thinkers consider that empathy also has a rational element.
 

As fairness, justice and interdependence are involved in empathy, it may be considered rational in nature and its application understood as an activity based on sound judgment.
- Related to Biological Evolution:** Empathy is considered an innate aspect of human nature. Like other aspects of human mental makeup, it might have arisen in the process of human biological evolution.
 

As such, it has helped human beings to adapt to the environment and to survive and reproduce. Of course, it also has a cultural component.

## Empathy, Sympathy And Compassion

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- Sympathy:** It is a feeling and expression of concern for someone, often accompanied by a wish for them to be happier or better off.
 

In general, sympathy implies a deeper, more personal, level of concern than pity, a simple expression of sorrow.
- Empathy:** It involves, first, seeing someone else's situation from his/ her perspective, and, second, sharing that person's emotions, including, if any, his distress.
 

Empathy occurs when you are truly trying to understand or experience someone else's emotions, as if they were your own.
- Compassion:** It is a deeper level of empathy, demonstrating an actual desire to help the suffering person.
 

It is a unique feeling of sympathy for the suffering of others that involves emotions and empathy towards others, a sense of understanding, and the drive to protect.

	Sympathy	Empathy	Compassion
Defining characteristics	Observing, Reacting, immediate, predominantly emotional awareness.	Acknowledgment of suffering, Understanding the person, Affective response.	Non-conditional, Virtuous, Altruistic, Instrumental, Action-oriented response

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Response to suffering	Acknowledgment	Acknowledgment, understanding, and emotional resonance	Acknowledgment, understanding, and emotional resonance linked with action aimed at understanding the person and the amelioration of suffering
Type of response	A visceral reaction to a distressing situation	Objective and affective response to a distressing situation	A proactive and targeted response to a distressing situation

## Benefits of Being Empathic

- Building Social Connections:** Empathy allows people to build social connections with others. By understanding what people are thinking and feeling, people are able to respond appropriately in social situations.
 

Research has shown that having social connections is important for both physical and psychological well-being.
- Regulating Emotions:** Empathizing with others helps you learn to regulate one's own emotions.
 

Emotional regulation is important in that it allows you to manage what you are feeling, even in times of great stress, without becoming overwhelmed.
- Empathy Promotes Helping Behaviors:** Not only people are more likely to engage in helpful behaviors when they feel empathy for other people, but other people are also more likely to help you when they experience empathy.

## Barriers to Empathy

A few reasons why people sometimes lack empathy include cognitive biases, dehumanization, and victim-blaming.

- Cognitive Biases:** Sometimes the way people perceive the world around them is influenced by a number of cognitive biases.
  - For example, people often attribute other people's failures to internal characteristics, while blaming their own shortcomings on external factors.
  - These biases can make it difficult to see all the factors that contribute to a situation and make it less likely that people will be able to see a situation from the perspective of another.

- **Dehumanization:** Many also fall victim to the trap of thinking that people who are different from them also don't feel and behave the same as they do. This is particularly common in cases when other people are physically distant.  
For example, when they watch reports of a disaster or conflict in a foreign land, people might be less likely to feel empathy if they think that those who are suffering are fundamentally different from themselves.
- **Victim Blaming:** Sometimes when another person has suffered a terrible experience, people make the mistake of blaming the victim for their circumstances. This is the reason why victims of crimes are often asked what they might have done differently to prevent the crime.

## Steps To Develop Empathy

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Empathy is a skill that can be learned and strengthened. There are a few things that one can do:

- **Develop Radical Listening:** Radical listening can have an extraordinary impact on resolving conflict situations and develop empathic behavior.  
Radical Listening means letting people have their say, hold back from interrupting and even reflect back what they've told you so they knew you were really listening.
- **Look for the Human Behind Everything:** A second step is to deepen empathic concern for others by developing an awareness of all those individuals hidden behind the surface of our daily lives, on whom we may depend in some way.
  - A Buddhist-inspired approach to this is to spend a whole day becoming mindful of every person connected to your routine actions.
  - It is precisely such mindful awareness that can spark empathic action on the behalf of others.

## Some Quotes Related to Empathy

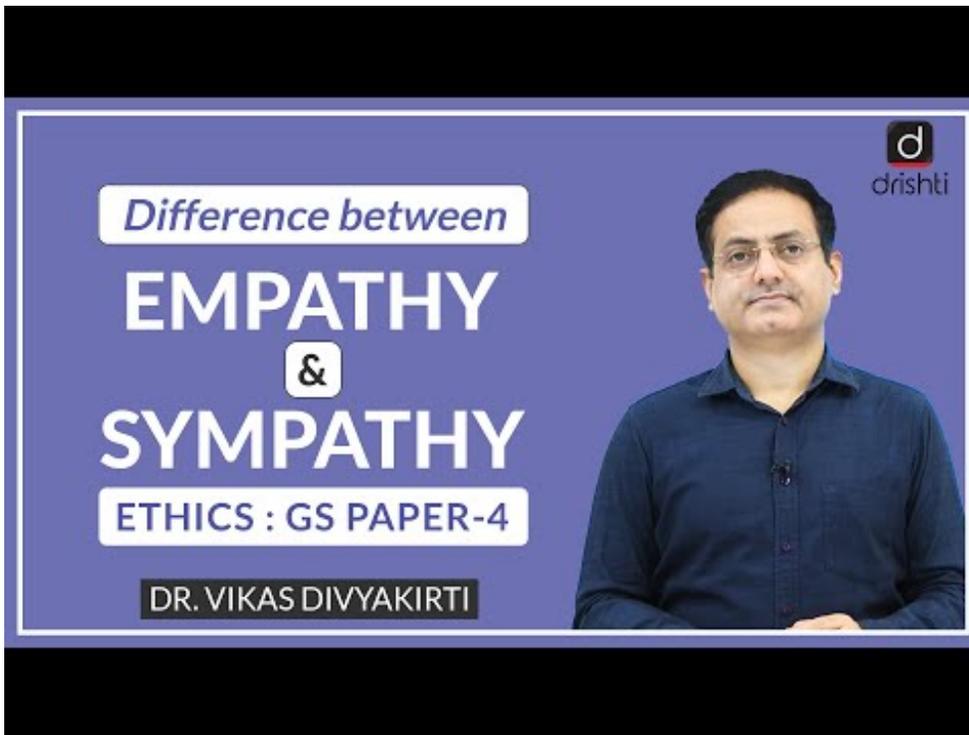
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- “You Can Only Understand People If you feel them up yourself”. —**John Steinbeck, East of Eden**
- “Yet, taught by time, my heart has learned to glow at other’s good, and melt at another's woe”. —**Homer**
- “When A good man is hurt all who would be called good must suffer with him” —**Euripides**
- “Seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the arsof another, and feeling with the heart of another”. —**Alfred Adler**
- “I call him religious who understands the sufferings of others”. —**Mahatma Gandhi**
- “If there is any one secret of success, it lies the ability to get the other person's view and see things from his angle as well as your own.” —**Henry Ford**

## Conclusion

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Empathy is the ability to see things from another person's perspective and sympathize with another's emotions, it plays an important role in establishing harmony in society. Empathy is essential for civil services, as in administrative situations, all relevant viewpoints have to be elicited and suitably accommodated.



[Watch Video At:](#)

<https://youtu.be/42WNHqzY9DU>

Watch “Empathy vs Sympathy: Concept Talk” by Dr. Vikas Divyakirti. Dr. Vikas Divyakirti, in this video, has explained the Meaning and Difference between the terms 'Empathy' and 'Sympathy'. Based on examples of everyday's and administrative life, this video explains what is the difference between these two terms (Empathy and Sympathy) used in Psychology and at what point this difference gets blurred.